



# National Security Strategy: Mandates, Execution to Date, and Issues for Congress

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## Summary

Strategy—together with decision-making, planning and execution, budgeting, and congressional oversight—is a critical component of U.S. government thinking and practice in the arena of national security. In theory, effective national security strategy-making can sharpen priorities and refine approaches; provide a single shared vision for all concerned agencies; clarify the roles and responsibilities of all concerned agencies so that they may more effectively plan and resource; offer a coherent baseline for congressional oversight; and communicate U.S. government intent to key audiences at home and abroad. While there is no single shared view of the boundaries of the concept of “national security,” many would include homeland security, and an array of economic, energy and/or environmental concerns, as well as traditional military affairs.

In practice, the U.S. government—at the levels of both the White House and individual agencies—conducts a wide array of strategic reviews, and issues many forms of strategic guidance. The pinnacle of the national security strategic architecture is the national security strategy, issued by the President. That effort is supported by an array of subordinate quadrennial reviews—the Quadrennial Defense Review by the Department of Defense, the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review by the Department of State, the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review issued by the Department of Homeland Security, and the Quadrennial Intelligence Community Review issued by the Office of the Director for National Intelligence—as well as a number of subordinate strategies including national defense strategy, national military strategy, national homeland security strategy, and national intelligence strategy. Yet in practice, the strategic architecture is more complex and less coherent than this synopsis might suggest, because these core strategic efforts are joined by a number of one-off strategic reviews and documents, and because timelines, content, and relationships among the various documents have all varied a great deal over time.

Congress has provided statutory mandates for many but not all U.S. government strategy-making activities. In principle, congressional oversight of Administration strategic efforts can help hold the executive branch accountable for both the content and the rigor of its thinking. To the extent that strategy actually shapes policy-making and resourcing, such strategy oversight can be a powerful tool for shaping real-world outcomes. In practice, executive branch compliance with statutory mandates—in terms of both form and content—has been mixed at best in recent history.

This report offers a brief overview of the role of strategy in conducting the business of national security; and it reviews the major statutory and non-statutory mandates for national security activities, addressing both requirements and execution to date. It analyzes key issues that may be of interest to Congress in exercising oversight of executive branch strategy-making, including the frequency of strategy updates; the synchronization of timelines and content among different strategies; the prioritization of objectives; the assignment of roles and responsibilities among relevant agencies; the links between strategy and resourcing; and the value of a competition of ideas.

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## Introduction

The U.S. government's national security system includes the organizations, structures, and processes that govern decision-making, budgeting, planning and execution, and congressional oversight of executive branch national security activities.<sup>1</sup> National security strategic guidance documents, including publicly available reports and classified internal instructions, and the various review processes that help generate them, are a key element of that system. While some strategy-making activities are carried out in response to statutory requirements, others are conducted on the basis of mandates from within the executive branch. As a rule, such activities help guide policy and resourcing decisions, and convey intent to internal and external audiences.

Core national security strategic guidance documents include the President's national security strategy (NSS), the Secretary of Defense's national defense strategy (NDS) and its associated quadrennial defense review (QDR) report, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's national military strategy (NMS). In theory, these documents and review exercises are all "nested" with each other, such that guidance issued at higher levels of the executive branch, for example by the President, informs guidance issued at lower levels, for example by the Secretary of Defense, whose guidance, in turn, informs that issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS).

In recent years, other agencies have adopted analogues to the Department of Defense's (DOD) QDR process: the Department of Homeland Security's Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR), the Department of State's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), and the intelligence community's Quadrennial Intelligence Community Review (QICR). Arguably, all of these reviews fall under the broad rubric of national security. Indeed, in recent years, many have suggested defining the concept of "national security" more broadly, beyond its traditional focus on national defense. The Obama Administration, at the start of its first term, declared the concepts of "national security" and "homeland security" to be "indistinguishable," and it institutionalized that concept organizationally by merging the previously separate National and Homeland Security Councils.<sup>2</sup> Others would stretch the concept of national security even further to include economic, energy, and/or environmental security.<sup>3</sup>

Some critics charge that executive branch processes for developing strategy are flawed because, for example, they fail to establish clear priorities, consider and apply fiscal constraints, or assign roles and responsibilities to specific agencies. Some note that executive branch conduct of strategic reviews and submission to Congress of statutorily required strategic guidance documents do not always fully comply with legislative mandates, while others note that some of the

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<sup>1</sup> The cornerstone of the current national security system is the National Security Act of 1947 as amended, designed to meet the challenges of the post-WWII, Cold War world. That legislation laid the foundations of a new national security regime, including the creation of the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, a separate Department of the Air Force, and a permanent Joint Chiefs of Staff. See National Security Act of 1947, P.L. 80-235.

<sup>2</sup> See Presidential Study Directive 1, "Organizing for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism," February 23, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Admiral Michael Mullen, while serving as CJCS, remarked on multiple occasions that the "single biggest threat to U.S. national security is our debt". See for example Roxana Tiron, "Joint Chiefs Chairman Reiterates Security Threat of High Debt," *The Hill*, June 24, 2010; and Tyrone C. Marshall Jr., "Debt is Biggest Threat to National Security, Chairman Says," *American Forces Press Service*, September 22, 2011.

mandates themselves could be improved—for example, by better synchronizing requirements for related documents.

For Congress, examining and shaping the Administration’s national security strategy activities may be one effective avenue for providing congressional oversight of executive branch national security activities. For example, Congress as a whole may enact or amend requirements for the conduct of strategic reviews and/or the creation and submission to Congress of strategy reports. Committees, in turn, may hold hearings to probe the processes and thinking behind required strategy reports or internal strategic review processes. And individual Members may shape the crafting or application of strategy through public statements or private correspondence with the executive branch.

This report provides an overview of mandates, statutory and otherwise, for key national security strategic reviews and reports; assesses recent execution; and raises issues that Congress may wish to consider as it conducts future oversight activities.

## Why Strategy?

In general, strategy articulates “ends” and then links “means” (resources) and “ways” (activities that utilize those resources) in a plan of action designed to achieve those ends, in a given context.<sup>4</sup> Strategy may also indicate the relative priority of each desired end. A strategy may be narrowly targeted, designed to achieve one specific goal, such as a strategy for a marketing campaign for a single new product, or it may address a broad field including multiple, prioritized objectives and initiatives, such as a company’s overall strategy to succeed in the marketplace. At its best, strategy is iterative—that is, there are feedback loops in place to facilitate updating the strategy changes in the strategic environment and on lessons learned as the strategy is implemented.

National security strategy for the U.S. government as a whole theoretically can serve several distinct purposes:

- By offering prioritized objectives and indicating which elements of national power are to be used to meet them, it can provide guidance to departments and agencies to use in their internal processes for budgeting, planning and executing, and organizing, training, and equipping personnel.
- By clearly linking goals with approaches designed to meet them, national security strategy can provide the executive branch with a key tool for internal decision-making, and for justifying requested resources and authorities to Congress.
- By laying out a detailed strategic vision, it can help inform public audiences both at home and abroad about U.S. government intent.

At the level of an individual agency, in turn, strategy can help locate that agency’s efforts in the context of the national security efforts of the government as a whole; confirm agency priorities;

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<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the elements of strategy, see John M. Collins, *Military Strategy: Principles, Practices, and Historical Perspectives*, Potomac Books, Inc: Dulles, VA, 2001.

clarify internal roles and missions; and provide a foundation for external communications including with Congress.

## Strategic Reviews and Reports with Statutory Requirements

Congress has enacted, and sometimes amended, an array of requirements for the executive branch to conduct strategic reviews and/or to publish strategy documents. In many cases, these strategic efforts are required to be synchronized with each other, though in some cases, the specified timelines arguably make synchronization a challenge. Executive branch compliance with these mandates, in form and substance, has varied a great deal over time. Evaluating the effectiveness of congressional oversight of executive branch strategy-making may depend in part on how one defines “effective strategy-making.”

### National Security Strategy (NSS)

NSS documents are issued by the President and pertain to the U.S. government as a whole.

- **Requirement:** The NSS was initially required by the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (Goldwater-Nichols Act), P.L. 99-433, §603, and is codified in Title 50, U.S. Code, §3043.
- **Contents of the mandate:** The NSS is a report “on the national security strategy of the United States” from the President to Congress. It is required to be submitted annually on the date the President submits his annual budget request, and in addition not more than 150 days from the date a new President takes office. It must be submitted in both classified and unclassified forms. The report must address U.S. interests, goals and objectives; the policies, worldwide commitments, and capabilities required to meet those objectives; and the use of elements of national power to achieve those goals; and it must provide an assessment of associated risk.<sup>5</sup>
- **Execution:** From 1987 through 2000, an NSS was submitted every year except in 1989 and 1992, though on various dates. The George W. Bush Administration submitted two NSSs—in September 2002 and in March 2006. The Obama Administration has submitted one so far, in May 2010. As a rule, recent NSS reports have described objectives and activities designed to meet those

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<sup>5</sup> Specifically, each NSS report is required to include “a comprehensive description and discussion of the following”: “(1) The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States. (2) The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States. (3) The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of the national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1). (4) The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy. (5) Such other information as may be necessary to help inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States.” See Title 50, U.S. Code, §3043(b).

objectives; they have not as a rule directly tackled “risk”—that is, the gap between anticipated requirements and planned ability to meet them. NSSs to date have been resource-unconstrained. They have not typically prioritized among the objectives they describe, or delineated responsibilities across agencies of the U.S. government—nor are they required to do so.<sup>6</sup>

## Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)

Quadrennial defense reviews, required by law, are internal DOD processes designed to formulate national defense strategy, and to determine the policies, approaches, and organization required to achieve that strategy, in broad support of national security strategy.<sup>7</sup>

- **Requirement:** The original QDR mandate was provided by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997, P.L. 104-201, §923. The requirement was amended and made permanent by the NDAA for FY2000, P.L. 106-65, and codified in Title 10, U.S. Code, §118. The mandate has been further amended by the NDAA for FY2002, FY2003, FY2007, FY2008, FY2010, and FY2012. The QDR was preceded by several other attempts to take a comprehensive look at defense strategy. These included DOD’s Base Force work, an attempt spearheaded by then-CJCS Colin Powell to define the minimum sufficient force structure for the post-Cold War era; its results were incorporated into the President’s August 1991 NSS and CJCS’s January 1992 National Military Strategy. That effort was followed by DOD’s 1993 Bottom-Up Review (BUR), a “comprehensive review” of “defense strategy, force structure, modernization, infrastructure, and foundations,” launched by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin that built on his work from his previous role as Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For example, under President George H.W. Bush, the 2002 NSS described the global strategic context, named broad goals (“political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity”), and described eight broad areas of effort designed to meet those goals. For each area, the NSS listed subset initiatives. But the NSS did not describe how those subset initiatives were to be achieved, and it did not assign responsibility for achieving them to specific agencies. Neither the eight major areas, nor the subset initiatives within each area, were prioritized. See President George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, September 2002, available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>. The 2006 NSS maintained the same basic format and content as the 2002 NSS, though it added an additional area of effort (“challenges and opportunities of globalization”) for a total of nine, and it included, in each area, a discussion of “successes” since 2002. See President George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 2006, available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006/index.html>. Under President Barack Obama, the 2010 NSS began by identifying four “enduring interests”: “the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. Allies and partners; a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; respect for universal values at home and around the world; and an international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges”. For each of those interests, the NSS named between three and six objectives, and for each objective, a number of sub-objectives. While it loosely prioritized among interests—“this Administration has no greater responsibility than the safety and security of the American people,” see p.4—it did not prioritize among objectives. While it included a three-page discussion of the importance of whole-of-government approaches, see pp. 14-16, and broadly described a division of labor among agencies, it did not assign roles and responsibilities for accomplishing named objectives. See President Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ .../national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/.../national_security_strategy.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> The QDR itself is a review process, while the QDR report is a written product produced by that process.

<sup>8</sup> See Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom Up Review*, October 1993, available at [http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/administration\\_and\\_Management/other/515.pdf](http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/administration_and_Management/other/515.pdf); Eric V. Larson, David T. Orletsky, (continued...)



- **Contents of the mandate:** The QDR itself is a review process, required to be conducted during the first year of every presidential administration. The review is required to take a 20-year outlook, and to be resource-unconstrained. The process is required to “delineate a national defense strategy”; to determine the force structure, modernization plans, and infrastructure required to implement that strategy; and to craft an associated budget plan.<sup>9</sup> Secretary of Defense is required to deliver a report based on the review to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees the year following the year in which the QDR is conducted, no later than the date on which the President delivers his budget request to Congress. Legislation does not specify a classification level for the report. The report is required to address 16 specific points including the results of the review, as well as any other items the Secretary deems appropriate.<sup>10</sup>

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Kristin Leuschner, *Defense Planning in a Decade of Change, Lessons from the Base Force, Bottom-Up Review, and Quadrennial Defense Review*, RAND, 2001; and Lorna S. Jaffe, *The Development of the Base Force 1989-1992*, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1993. While neither the Base Force work nor the BUR was conducted on the basis of an explicit Congressional mandate, strong Congressional interest in the implications of the end of the Cold War for U.S. military strategy and force structure was apparent in legislation; see the NDAA for FY1991, P.L. 101-510, §1032, enacted on November 5, 1990, which called for detailed examination of military strategy including force structure for three potential strategic scenarios. Even more ambitiously—and also spurred by the end of the Cold War—in March 1989, President George H.W. Bush issued a memo, National Security Review 12 (NSR 12), calling on the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with CJCS, to conduct a review of national defense strategy, and to submit the results, in the form of a series of reports, to the full National Security Council for review and discussion. For each report topic—current defense posture and key trends, defense objectives and strategies, force posture in a constrained resource environment, and the role of arms control—the memo specified a list of challenging questions for DOD to answer. DOD’s NSR 12 efforts were led by then-Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) Paul Wolfowitz. See National Security Review 12, “Review of National Defense Strategy,” dated March 3, 1989, available at <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/nsr.php>.

<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the review is required (1) to delineate a national defense strategy consistent with the most recent National Security Strategy prescribed by the President pursuant to §108 of the National Security Act of 1947 (Title 50 U.S. Code §404a); (2) to define sufficient force structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the defense program of the United States associated with that national defense strategy that would be required to execute successfully the full range of missions called for in that national defense strategy; (3) to identify (A) the budget plan that would be required to provide sufficient resources to execute successfully the full range of missions called for in that national defense strategy at a low-to-moderate level of risk, and (B) any additional resources (beyond those programmed in the current future-years defense program) required to achieve such a level of risk; and (4) to make recommendations that are not constrained to comply with and are fully independent of the budget submitted to Congress by the President pursuant to §1105 of Title 31 U.S. Code. See §118(b) Title 10, U.S. Code.

<sup>10</sup> Specifically, the report is required to include “(1) The results of the review, including a comprehensive discussion of the national defense strategy of the United States, the strategic planning guidance, and the force structure best suited to implement that strategy at a low-to-moderate level of risk. (2) The assumed or defined national security interests of the United States that inform the national defense strategy defined in the review. (3) The threats to the assumed or defined national security interests of the United States that were examined for the purposes of the review and the scenarios developed in the examination of those threats. (4) The assumptions used in the review, including assumptions relating to (A) the status of readiness of United States forces; (B) the cooperation of allies, mission-sharing and additional benefits to and burdens on United States forces resulting from coalition operations; (C) warning times; (D) levels of engagement in operations other than war and smaller-scale contingencies and withdrawal from such operations and contingencies; (E) the intensity, duration, and military and political end-states of conflicts and smaller-scale contingencies; and (F) the roles and responsibilities that would be discharged by contractors. (5) The effect on the force structure and on readiness for high-intensity combat of preparations for and participation in operations other than war and smaller-scale contingencies. (6) The manpower, sustainment, and contractor support policies required under the national defense strategy to support engagement in conflicts lasting longer than 120 days. (7) The anticipated roles and missions of the reserve components in the national defense strategy and the strength, capabilities, and equipment necessary to assure that the reserve components can capably discharge those roles and missions. (8) The appropriate (continued...) ”

- **Execution:** To date, each QDR report has been submitted to Congress as required—in 1997, 2001, 2006, and 2010.<sup>11</sup> The next report is due in February 2014. Substantive compliance has arguably been mixed, depending on how much detail one believes is required to meet congressional intent. For example, while QDR reports all address some capability requirements, they rarely if ever specify the “number and type of specific military platforms.” QDR reports typically do not prioritize among defense objectives or specifically delineate roles and responsibilities within the Department. As of mid-2013, the 2014 QDR process is reportedly underway, but many defense officials wonder whether, and to what extent, the scope and depth of the QDR may be curtailed by the conclusions of the Strategic Choices and Management Review process conducted in spring 2013.

## National Defense Strategy (NDS)

National defense strategy articulates the ends that the Department of Defense will pursue to help execute the national security strategy, together with the ways and means that DOD will use to do so.

- **Requirement:** Title 10, U.S. Code, §118 requires that the QDR process “delineate a national defense strategy” and that the QDR report include a “comprehensive discussion of the national defense strategy of the United States.” There is no separate statutory mandate for an NDS.
- **Contents of the mandate:** §118 requires that the NDS—as part of the QDR report—be submitted to Armed Services Committees every four years, no later than the President’s budget submission. There is no statutory description of the discrete contents of defense strategy, but §118 requires that it be consistent with the most recent NSS.

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ratio of combat forces to support forces (commonly referred to as the “tooth-to-tail” ratio) under the national defense strategy, including, in particular, the appropriate number and size of headquarters units and Defense Agencies, and the scope of contractor support, for that purpose. (9) The specific capabilities, including the general number and type of specific military platforms, needed to achieve the strategic and warfighting objectives identified in the review. (10) The strategic and tactical air-lift, sea-lift, and ground transportation capabilities required to support the national defense strategy. (11) The forward presence, pre-positioning, and other anticipatory deployments necessary under the national defense strategy for conflict deterrence and adequate military response to anticipated conflicts. (12) The extent to which resources must be shifted among two or more theaters under the national defense strategy in the event of conflict in such theaters. (13) The advisability of revisions to the Unified Command Plan as a result of the national defense strategy. (14) The effect on force structure of the use by the armed forces of technologies anticipated to be available for the ensuing 20 years. (15) The national defense mission of the Coast Guard. (16) The homeland defense and support to civil authority missions of the active and reserve components, including the organization and capabilities required for the active and reserve components to discharge each such mission. (17) Any other matter the Secretary considers appropriate.” Substantively, these requirements regarding the contents of the QDR report have remained relatively consistent over time; key issues introduced since the one-time QDR requirement in 1997 include contractors, in (4)(F), (6), and (8); “specific military platforms” in (9); the Coast Guard in (15); and the active and reserve components in (16). See §118(d) Title 10, U.S. Code.

<sup>11</sup> See William S. Cohen, Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review, May 1997, available at <http://www.dod.mil/pubs/qdr/>; Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, September 30, 2001, available at <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/qdr2001.pdf>; Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, February 6, 2006, available at <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/report/report20060203.pdf>; and Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, February 2010, available at <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/>.

- **Execution:** The 1997 and 2001 QDR reports each explicitly included a national defense strategy.<sup>12</sup> The 2006 and 2010 QDRs did not. Instead, DOD issued stand-alone NDSs in 2005 and 2008.<sup>13</sup> In addition, on January 5, 2012, DOD issued “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense,” commonly referred to as the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG).<sup>14</sup> It is generally expected that this DSG will serve as the basic foundation for the QDR report due in 2014; but many have raised questions about the DSG’s continued pertinence, since it explicitly did not account for the pressures on the defense budget associated with sequestration-level topline budget caps.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Section III of the 1997 QDR Report was entitled “Defense Strategy,” and it began with a summary of national security strategy, including national interests, based on the (recent) February 1996 NSS. See William S. Cohen, Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review, May 1997, available at <http://www.dod.mil/pubs/qdr/>. Section II of the 2001 QDR Report was entitled “Defense Strategy.” It introduced the quadripartite “assure, dissuade, deter, defeat” description of defense policy goals—that is, “assuring allies and friends; dissuading future military competition; deterring threats and coercion against U.S. interests; and if deterrence fails, decisively defeating any adversary.” At that time, the most recent NSS dated from December 2000, at the end of the Clinton Administration; the 2001 NDS in the QDR did not specifically refer to national strategy. See William S. Cohen, Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review, May 1997, available at <http://www.dod.mil/pubs/qdr/>; Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, September 30, 2001, available at <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/qdr2001.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> The 2005 NDS, notable for introducing a new, quadripartite categorization of global security challenges—“traditional,” “irregular,” “catastrophic,” and “disruptive”—repeatedly cited the most recent NSS, which dated from September 2002. It directly informed the 2006 QDR Report, which echoed the NDS’s four global security challenges. See Department of Defense, The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, March 2005, available at <http://www.defense.gov/news/Mar2005/d20050318nds1.pdf>. The 2008 NDS began by stating that it “flows from the NSS and informs the National Military Strategy,” “provides a framework for other DoD strategic guidance,” and “reflects the results of the 2006 QDR,” pp. 1-2. It largely retained the fundamental concerns about the global security environment that had underpinned the 2005 NDS and the 2006 QDR—violent extremism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the rise of major powers such as China and Russia, and the unpredictability of “rogue” states such as Iran and North Korea. It formulated these concerns in terms of five “objectives”: “defend the homeland; win the long war; promote security; deter conflict; and win our nation’s wars”. It prescribed five lines of effort designed to achieve these objectives: “shaping the choices of key states; preventing adversaries from acquiring or using weapons of mass destruction; strengthening and expanding Alliances and partnerships; securing U.S. strategic access and retaining freedom of action; and integrating and unifying our efforts”. See Department of Defense, National Defense Strategy, June 2008, available at <http://www.defense.gov/news/2008%20National%20Defense%20Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> The DSG emphasized a shift in overall focus from winning today’s wars to preparing for future challenges; a shift in geographical priorities toward the Asia Pacific region while retaining emphasis on the Middle East; a shift in the balance of missions toward more emphasis on projecting power in areas in which U.S. access and freedom to operate are challenged by asymmetric means and less emphasis on stabilization operations, while retaining a full-spectrum force; a corresponding shift in force structure, including reductions in Army and Marine Corps endstrength, toward a smaller, more agile force including the ability to mobilize quickly; and a corresponding shift toward advanced capabilities including Special Operations Forces, new technologies such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and unmanned systems, and cyberspace capabilities. Department of Defense, Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense, January 2012, available at [http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense\\_Strategic\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf). For an overview and analysis, see CRS R 42146, In Brief: Assessing DOD’s New Strategic Guidance, by Catherine Dale and Pat Towell.

<sup>15</sup> See Budget Control Act of 2011, P.L. 112-25, August 2, 2011, §101 and §302, which amended §251 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. For background and analysis, see CRS Report R42607, *Defense: FY2013 Authorization and Appropriations*, by Pat Towell.

## National Military Strategy (NMS)

In general, national military strategy concerns the organized application of military means in support of broader national (political) goals.<sup>16</sup>

- **Requirement:** The NDAA for FY2004, P.L. 108-136, §903, introduced a permanent requirement for an NMS, codified in Title 10, U.S. Code, §153(b), as amended by the NDAAs for FY2012 and FY2013. While no explicit permanent mandate for an NMS was enacted until 2003, the general need for a military strategy was recognized in both law and practice much earlier. Title 10, U.S. Code, §153(a), as introduced by the Goldwater-Nichols Act, assigns responsibility to CJCS for “assisting the President and Secretary of Defense in providing for the strategic direction of the armed forces.” In the early 1990’s, Congress enacted a temporary NMS requirement; §1032 of the NDAA for FY1991, P.L. 101-510, required CJCS to submit to the Secretary of Defense a strategic military plan, in both classified and unclassified form, by the first day of each calendar year from 1991 through 1993. Each plan would address three different scenarios based on specified strategic contexts and fiscal constraints. For each scenario, the plan would address strategic threats, the requirements for meeting those threats, the roles and missions of the Military Services, and force structure. In turn, the Secretary of Defense was required to forward each plan to Congress—during fiscal years 1992, 1993, and 1994 respectively—together with his comments and recommendations. Before that time, it had been common practice for CJCS to craft a classified NMS as a vehicle for advising the Secretary and the President. After the expiration of the temporary mandate, CJCS issued unclassified NMSs in 1995 and 1997.<sup>17</sup>
- **Contents of the mandate:** CJCS is required, every two years, to determine whether to prepare a new NMS or to update the previous one; and to submit the new NMS or update, through the Secretary of Defense, to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees by February 15 of each even-numbered year. The legislation does not prescribe the classification level. The NMS is required to be consistent with the most recent NSS, the most recent QDR, and with “any other national security or defense strategic guidance issued by the President or the Secretary of Defense.” Each NMS is required to address strategic challenges and opportunities; U.S. military objectives; the missions and activities required to accomplish those objectives; force planning and sizing; contributions from interagency and international partners and from contractors, and resource constraints that affect the strategy.<sup>18</sup> The Secretary is required to include with the strategy transmittal any comments the Secretary considers appropriate.

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<sup>16</sup> English military theorist Liddell Hart famously described military strategy as “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy.” See Liddell Hart, B.H., *Strategy*, London: Faber, 1967, p.321.

<sup>17</sup> See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy: A Strategy of Flexible and Selective Engagement*, February 1995; and CJCS, *National Military Strategy: Shape, Respond, Prepare Now – a Military Strategy for a New Era*, 1997; as well as Lorna S. Jaffe, *The Development of the Base Force 1989-1992*, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1993. The 1995 NMS explained that the 1994 NSS had described the relevant national security objectives and “provided the Armed Forces the guidance to shape our military strategy.” The 1997 NMS stated that it was based on the May 1997 NSS and the 1997 QDR Report.

<sup>18</sup> In particular, Title 10, U.S. Code §153(b)(1)(D) requires that each NMS identify: “(i) the United States military (continued...) ”

- **Execution:** The first NMS issued on the basis of the permanent requirement was the 2004 National Military Strategy. It stated that it “supports the aims of the National Security Strategy and implements the National Defense Strategy.” While it was issued in advance of the March 2005 NDS, key concepts in both strategies were developed in tandem, for example the “four strategic challenges”—traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive.<sup>19</sup> The subsequent, and most recent, NMS was issued in 2011, following the release of both an NSS and a QDR report in 2010.<sup>20</sup>

## Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review (QRM)

While mandates have varied over time, both law and practice have long recognized the potential value of a rigorous assessment of roles and missions within DOD.

- **Requirement:** The permanent statutory requirement for a separate QRM review by the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with CJCS, is found in Title 10, U.S. Code, §118b, as amended by §941 of the NDAA for FY2008, P.L. 110-181. An earlier requirement for a roles and missions review by CJCS was created by the Goldwater-Nichols Act, §201, which amended Title 10, U.S. Code to include the requirement, in §153(b), that CJCS provide the Secretary of Defense a report on the assignment of roles and missions to the armed forces. The report was to be produced not less than once every three years, or at the request of the President or the Secretary. It was to take into account threats, changes in technology, and the need to prevent unnecessary duplication of effort. There was no requirement to submit the report to Congress. The NDAA for FY2001, P.L. 107-107, preserved the premise that CJCS should assess roles and missions but made that responsibility part of the Chairman’s assessment of the QDR—thus mandating

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objectives and the relationship of those objectives to the strategic environment and to the threats required to be described under subparagraph (E); (ii) the operational concepts, missions, tasks, or activities necessary to support the achievement of the objectives identified under clause (i); (iii) the fiscal, budgetary, and resource environments and conditions that, in the assessment of the Chairman, affect the strategy; and (iv) the assumptions made with respect to each of clauses (i) through (iii)”. §153(b)(1)(E) requires that each NMS include a description of: “(i) the strategic environment and the opportunities and challenges that affect United States national interests and United States national security; (ii) the threats, such as international, regional, transnational, hybrid, terrorism, cyber attack, weapons of mass destruction, asymmetric challenges, and any other categories of threats identified by the Chairman, to the United States national security; (iii) the implications of current force planning and sizing constructs for the strategy; (iv) the capacity, capabilities, and availability of United States forces (including both the active and reserve components) to support the execution of missions required by the strategy; (v) areas in which the armed forces intends to engage and synchronize with other departments and agencies of the United States Government contributing to the execution of missions required by the strategy; (vi) areas in which the armed forces could be augmented by contributions from alliances (such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), international allies, or other friendly nations in the execution of missions required by the strategy; (vii) the requirements for operational contractor support to the armed forces for conducting security force assistance training, peacekeeping, overseas contingency operations, and other major combat operations under the strategy; and (viii) the assumptions made with respect to each of clauses (i) through (vii)”.

<sup>19</sup> See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers, 2004 National Military Strategy of the United States of America: A Strategy for Today, a Vision for Tomorrow, 2004, available at <http://www.defense.gov/news/mar2005/d20050318nms.pdf>; and interviews with DOD officials, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, The National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Redefining America’s Military Leadership, February 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/>.

that the assessment be quadrennial rather than triennial, and that its results be presented to Congress (as part of the QDR submission).<sup>21</sup>

- **Contents of the Mandate:** The current QRM mandate requires the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with CJCS, to conduct a roles and missions review every four years, and to submit a report based on the review to the Armed Services Committees no later than the submission of the President's budget request, in February of the following year. As part of the review, the Secretary is required to identify the "core mission areas" of the armed forces, the capabilities required to perform those missions, the assignment of responsibility within DOD for providing those capabilities, and any gaps or unnecessary duplication of effort.<sup>22</sup> The Secretary is required to base these findings in part on the results of a separate, independent military review of roles and missions conducted by CJCS. P.L. 110-181 §941(c) required that the first QRM under this mandate be conducted in 2008, and that subsequent QRMs be conducted every four years beginning in 2011.
- **Execution:** To date, DOD has complied with QRM mandated timelines, submitting the first report in 2009 and the second in 2012.<sup>23</sup> Some observers suggested that the 2012 QRM report—compared with its 2009 predecessor—reflected a certain lack of rigor, not least because the 2012 report appeared to pull most of its contents directly from the 2012 DSG. The next QRM report is due to Congress in 2016. Some observers have raised questions about the division of labor, in theory and in practice, between the QRM and the QDR. Statutory requirements space QRM execution and submission squarely in the middle of the QDR cycle. In theory, DOD's "core missions," as laid out in the QRM, might be derived from the assessment of the strategic landscape and DOD's strategy for meeting its challenges, as laid out in the QDR and its built-in NDS. As long as the basic premises of the defense strategy still hold, which is by no means a given, a two-year gap between adjudication of defense strategy, and assessment of the appropriateness of the assignment of roles and missions for executing that

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<sup>21</sup> §921(a) of the NDAA for FY2002, P.L. 107-107, amended §118 of Title 10, U.S. Code—which provided the permanent requirement for a QDR as introduced by the NDAA for FY2000, P.L. 106-65—by adding to §118(e), which requires CJCS to provide an assessment of the QDR, the requirement that CJCS include in that work an assessment of the roles and missions of the armed forces, giving particular consideration to duplication of effort and changes in technology. P.L. 107-107 §921(b) eliminated redundancy by amending §153(b) of Title 10, U.S. Code, to strike the requirement for a triennial report on the assignment of roles and missions. The NDAA for FY2008, P.L. 110-181, the basis for the current QRM requirement, also prevented redundancy by striking the roles and missions assessment requirement in §118(e) of Title 10, U.S. Code, when it created §118b.

<sup>22</sup> Specifically, the Secretary is required to identify: "(1) the core mission areas of the armed forces; (2) the core competencies and capabilities that are associated with the performance or support of a core mission area identified pursuant to paragraph (1); (3) the elements of the Department of Defense (including any other office, agency, activity, or command described in section 111(b) of this title) that are responsible for providing the core competencies and capabilities required to effectively perform the core missions identified pursuant to paragraph (1); (4) any gaps in the ability of the elements (or other office, agency activity, or command) of the Department of Defense to provide core competencies and capabilities required to effectively perform the core missions identified pursuant to paragraph (1); (5) any unnecessary duplication of core competencies and capabilities between defense components; and (6) a plan for addressing any gaps or unnecessary duplication identified pursuant to paragraph (4) or paragraph (5)". See Title 10, U.S. Code, §118b(c).

<sup>23</sup> See Department of Defense, Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report, January 2009, available at [http://www.defense.gov/news/Jan2009/QRMFinalReport\\_v26Jan.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/Jan2009/QRMFinalReport_v26Jan.pdf); and Department of Defense, Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review, 2012.

strategy, might in principle allow sufficient time to gauge the effectiveness of the division of labor. However, the practice of de-linking the NDS from the QDR might distort the logic of that timeline somewhat.

## **Chairman's Risk Assessment (CRA)**

Formal strategy-making and planning both include, by definition, a consideration of “risk”—the gap between what the strategy or plan is designed to accomplish, and what it would take to fully meet identified challenges. Statute requires that CJCS regularly assess the risk associated with the NMS.

- **Requirement:** The permanent requirement for a CRA is codified in Title 10, U.S. Code, §153(b). The original requirement was introduced by the NDAA for FY2000, P.L. 106-65, §1033, which amended Title 10, U.S. Code, §153, adding the requirement that CJCS, not later than January 1 each year, submit to the Secretary of Defense “a report providing the Chairman’s assessment of the nature and magnitude of the strategic and military risks associated with executing the missions called for under the current national military strategy.” The Secretary was required to forward that report to Congress, together with the annual budget request. If the Chairman assessed any “significant” risk, the Secretary was required to include in the transmittal to Congress a plan for mitigating that risk. The creation of a requirement to address risk associated with the NMS actually pre-dated the permanent statutory requirement for an NMS itself by several years, although it was already established practice for the CJCS to craft an NMS. The NDAA for FY2003, P.L. 107-314, re-designated the CRA provision as §153(b), and the NDAA for FY2004, P.L. 108-136, made the mandate biennial by substituting “each odd-numbered year” for the previous annual submission requirement. The NDAA for FY2012, P.L. 112-81, § 941, refined the content of the CRA; and the NDAA for FY2013, P.L. 112-239, §952, substantially re-organized §153 of Title 10, U.S. Code, changed the CRA back to an annual requirement, and significantly revised the required contents of the NMS as well as of the CRA.
- **Contents of the Mandate:** By current mandate, CJCS is required, every year, to prepare an assessment of risks associated with the most current NMS (or update), and to submit that assessment, through the Secretary of Defense, to the Armed Services Committees, no later than February 15. The CRA must address strategic risks to U.S. interests, and military risks to executing the missions required by the NMS, distinguishing as it does so between the probability and severity of those risks. It must give attention to fiscal constraints and address anticipated contributions by others including other U.S. agencies, international partners, and contractors.<sup>24</sup> The Secretary is required to produce and submit to Congress, with

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<sup>24</sup> Specifically, the CRA is required to do the following: “(i) As the Chairman considers appropriate, update any changes to the strategic environment, threats, objectives, force planning and sizing constructs, assessments, and assumptions that informed the National Military Strategy required by this section. (ii) Identify and define the strategic risks to United States interests and the military risks in executing the missions of the National Military Strategy. (iii) Identify and define levels of risk distinguishing between the concepts of probability and consequences, including an identification of what constitutes “significant” risk in the judgment of the Chairman. (iv)(I) Identify and assess risk in (continued...) ”

the CRA, a risk mitigation plan (RMP) that addresses any “significant” risks identified by the CRA. The RMP must include steps designed to mitigate the risks, and it must describe the extent to which, and the timeline by which, it is anticipated that the risks will be mitigated.<sup>25</sup>

- **Execution:** Over the past decade, as statutory requirements regarding CRA submission timelines were adjusted several times, DOD has submitted CRAs to Congress frequently, if not always in compliance with the current mandate at the time. The most recent CRA was submitted in April 2013. All have been submitted in classified format, although the legislation does not specify a classification level. In substance, CRAs have defined the statutory categories of strategic and military risk in somewhat varied ways, with some apparent impact on the issues selected for inclusion. The RMPs, as a rule, have struggled to distinguish between “risks”—that is, the gaps, given existing threats to national security, between what it would take to meet those threats and current capacity and capabilities for doing so—and simple “threats”; and thus the plans for “risk mitigation” have more typically been, instead, descriptions of ways and means designed to meet threats.

## National Defense Panel (NDP)

Many practitioners and observers have suggested the value of a competition of ideas, to spur the rigor and creativity of any strategic review process. Such a competition may be internal or external—aimed respectively at improving the process itself or at fostering a robust debate that weighs the findings of the process against alternatives. The current NDP requirement is the most recent expression of congressional interest in fostering a competition of ideas associated with the QDR.

- **Requirement:** The current statutory mandate for the NDP is found in Title 10 U.S. Code, §118(f), as amended most recently by §1071 of the Ike Skelton NDAA for FY2011, P.L. 111-383. This mandate borrows its name and broad

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the National Military Strategy by category and level and the ways in which risk might manifest itself, including how risk is projected to increase, decrease, or remain stable over time; and (II) for each category of risk, assess the extent to which current or future risk increases, decreases, or is stable as a result of budgetary priorities, tradeoffs, or fiscal constraints or limitations as currently estimated and applied in the most current future-years defense program under section 221 of this title. (v) Identify and assess risk associated with the assumptions or plans of the National Military Strategy about the contributions or support of (I) other departments and agencies of the United States Government (including their capabilities and availability); (II) alliances, allies, and other friendly nations (including their capabilities, availability, and interoperability); and (III) contractors. (vi) Identify and assess the critical deficiencies and strengths in force capabilities (including manpower, logistics, intelligence, and mobility support) identified during the preparation and review of the contingency plans of each unified combatant command, and identify and assess the effect of such deficiencies and strengths for the National Military Strategy”. See Title 10, U.S. Code, §153(b)(2)(B).

<sup>25</sup> Specifically, each RMP must: “(i) address the risk assumed in the National Military Strategy (or update) concerned, and the additional actions taken or planned to be taken to address such risk using only current technology and force structure capabilities; and (ii) specify, for each risk addressed, the extent of, and a schedule for expected mitigation of, such risk, and an assessment of the potential for residual risk, if any, after mitigation”. See Title 10, U.S. Code, §153(b)(4)(B).



intent from a series of prior requirements. The original requirement for an NDP was introduced by §923 and 924 of the NDAA for FY1997, P.L. 104-201, which also created the initial, one-time requirement for the 1997 QDR. That law called for a one-time “nonpartisan, independent” panel of universally-recognized senior defense experts to do a mid-course assessment of the DOD QDR process; to provide an assessment of DOD’s review upon completion; and to conduct an “alternative force structure assessment.” The permanent requirement for a QDR assessment panel dates to 2006. In the wake of the 2006 QDR process, Congress, in the John Warner NDAA for FY2007, P.L. 109-364, §1031, amended Title 10 U.S. Code, §118, to revive the basic premise of the NDP. The provision created a permanent mandate for a QDR independent panel (QDRIP) to conduct an “assessment of the [QDR] review, including the recommendations of the review, the stated and implied assumptions incorporated in the review, and the vulnerabilities of the strategy and force structure underlying the review.” In the NDAA for FY2010, P.L. 111-84, §1061, Congress, without amending Title 10, provided one-time guidance, regarding panel membership and duties, for the work of the QDRIP in support of the 2010 QDR process. In terms of substance, the QDRIP was tasked that year to review the Secretary’s terms of reference; assess the assumptions, strategy, findings and risks in the QDR report; conduct an independent assessment of possible force structures; and compare the resource requirements of its own alternative force structures with the QDR’s budget plan.

- **Contents of the Mandate:** The current NDP mandate flows directly from that legislative history. In the Ike Skelton NDAA for FY2011, P.L. 111-383, §1071, Congress amended Title 10, US Code, §118(f), regarding the QDRIP. It renamed the panel the National Defense Panel. And it incorporated key provisions, including the panel’s mandate, from the FY2010 NDAA one-time mandate regarding the role of the QDRIP in the 2010 QDR process.<sup>26</sup> By statute, the NDP must be established no later than February 1 of any year in which a QDR process is conducted. The NDP must include ten members total—two each appointed by the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the two Armed Services Committees, and two by the Secretary of Defense. And the NDP must submit its findings to the Armed Services Committees no later than three months after the date of the QDR’s submission.
- **Execution:** The original NDP, constituted to support the 1997 QDR, did not meet the requirements specified by law. It found itself unable to conduct a full alternative assessment, and it did not attempt to evaluate the work of the formal QDR process. Instead, it crafted an alternative conceptual approach—the need for “transformation” as the foundation for determining future force structure.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Specifically, the NDP is required to “(i) review the Secretary of Defense’s terms of reference and any other materials providing the basis for, or substantial inputs to, the work of the Department of Defense on the quadrennial defense review; (ii) conduct an assessment of the assumptions, strategy, findings, and risks of the report on the quadrennial defense review required in subsection (d), with particular attention paid to the risks described in that report; (iii) conduct an independent assessment of a variety of possible force structures of the armed forces, including the force structure identified in the report on the quadrennial defense review required in subsection (d); (iv) review the resource requirements identified pursuant to subsection (b)(3) and, to the extent practicable, make a general comparison to the resource requirements to support the forces contemplated under the force structures assessed under this subparagraph; and (v) provide to Congress and the Secretary of Defense, through the report under paragraph (7), any recommendations it considers appropriate for their consideration”. See Title 10, U.S. Code, §118(f)(5)(B).

<sup>27</sup> See Philip A. Odeen, Chairman, “Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Report of the (continued...)

The QDRIP, to support the 2010 QDR, completed its final report in July 2010 and presented its findings to Congress in a public forum shortly thereafter. Rather than grade the homework of the 2010 QDR, *per se*, the QDRIP critically assessed the conduct of QDRs since their inception, and it called for the discontinuation of the QDR process in favor of normal DOD planning cycles and a proposed new interagency-level strategic planning process. The QDRIP did provide its own alternative strategic assessment and force structure recommendation as required by law; it did not provide the required comparative cost estimates.<sup>28</sup> The NDP, to support the 2014 QDR, got off to a somewhat late start, in part to allow time for new Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, sworn in on February 27, 2013, to appoint the panel's leadership.<sup>29</sup>

## Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR)

The U.S. government's homeland security architecture was created in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The QHSR ("kisser" in common parlance), modeled explicitly on DOD's QDR, was part of that set of changes.

- **Requirement:** The permanent mandate for a QHSR was introduced by §2401 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, P.L. 110-53, §2401, which amended Title VII of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, P.L. 107-296, adding §707. The requirement is codified at Title 6, U.S. Code, §347.
- **Contents of the Mandate:** Statute requires that every four years, beginning in FY2009, the Secretary of Homeland Security conduct a "review of the homeland security of the nation." The review must be conducted in consultation with a number of specified governmental and nongovernmental agencies.<sup>30</sup> The review must delineate a national homeland security strategy; outline and prioritize missions; describe interagency cooperation and preparedness; identify the budget

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National Defense Panel, December 1997. See also John E. Tedstrom and John G. McGinn, "Planning America's Security: Lessons from the National Defense Panel," RAND Corporation, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen J. Hadley and William J. Perry, Co-Chairmen, "The QDR in Perspective: Meeting America's National Security Needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," The Final Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review Independent Panel, July 2010. On August 3, 2010, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) held a full committee hearing on the QDRIP results, with panel Co-Chairs Hadley and Perry as witnesses.

<sup>29</sup> The members of the NDP for the 2014 QDR process, organized by those who appointed them, include former Secretary of Defense William Perry and U.S. Army General (retired) John Abizaid (Secretary of Defense); former U.S. Senator Jim Talent and Ambassador and former Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) Eric Edelman (House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Chairman); former Representative and President of the U.S. Institute of Peace Jim Marshall and U.S. Army Lieutenant General (retired) Frank Kearney (HASC Ranking); former Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) Michele Flournoy and U.S. Marine Corps General (retired) James Cartwright (SASC Chairman); and U.S. Air Force General (retired) Gregory Martin and U.S. Army Lieutenant General (retired) Michael Maples (SASC Ranking).

<sup>30</sup> Specifically, these include "the heads of other Federal agencies, including the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Director of National Intelligence; key officials of the Department of Homeland Security; and other relevant governmental and nongovernmental entities, including state, local, and tribal government officials, Members of Congress, private sector representatives, academics, and other policy experts". See Title 6, U.S. Code, §347(a)(3).

plan required; assess organizational alignment; and assess the procedures of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for acquisition and expenditure.<sup>31</sup> The legislation does not specifically require the QHSR to be consistent with the current National Security Strategy, but the requirement for consistency with “appropriate national and Department strategies” might be understood to include the NSS. The legislation does require, however, that the QHSR be consistent with the National Strategy for Homeland Security.<sup>32</sup> The Secretary must submit a report based on the review to Congress by December 31 of the year in which the QHSR is conducted. The report is to be unclassified, and DHS is further instructed to make the report publicly available on its website. The next report is due to be conducted in 2013 and submitted to Congress by December 31, 2013.

- **Execution:** To date, one QHSR has been required; it was submitted to Congress in February 2010. The first QHSR report included a striking disclaimer up front: “The report is not a resource prioritization document, although in identifying key mission areas for priority focus, it is highly indicative of where those priorities

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<sup>31</sup> Specifically, in each review, the Secretary of Homeland Security is required to: “(1) delineate and update, as appropriate, the national homeland security strategy, consistent with appropriate national and Department strategies, strategic plans, and Homeland Security Presidential Directives, including the National Strategy for Homeland Security, the National Response Plan, and the Department Security Strategic Plan; (2) outline and prioritize the full range of the critical homeland security mission areas of the Nation; (3) describe the interagency cooperation, preparedness of Federal response assets, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the homeland security program and policies of the Nation associated with the national homeland security strategy, required to execute successfully the full range of missions called for in the national homeland security strategy described in paragraph (1) and the homeland security mission areas outlined under paragraph (2); (4) identify the budget plan required to provide sufficient resources to successfully execute the full range of missions called for in the national homeland security strategy described in paragraph (1) and the homeland security mission areas outlined under paragraph (2); (5) include an assessment of the organizational alignment of the Department with the national homeland security strategy referred to in paragraph (1) and the homeland security mission areas outlined under paragraph (2); and (6) review and assess the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the Department for executing the process of turning the requirements developed in the quadrennial homeland security review into an acquisition strategy and expenditure plan within the Department”. See Title 6, U.S. Code, §347(b).

<sup>32</sup> The legislative intent of §347(b)(1), which requires that the QHSR “delineate and update, as appropriate, the national homeland security strategy, consistent with ...the National Strategy for Homeland Security,” may not be wholly apparent. There is no separate statutory mandate for a national strategy for homeland security. However, in practice, after President George W. Bush created the Office of Homeland Security at the White House, in October 2001, he directed it, as its first responsibility, to craft a strategy. The Office issued the first National Strategy for Homeland Security in July 2002; that strategy outlined broad strategic objectives and threats, and proposed specific initiatives to meet those threats in six “critical mission areas”. See Office of Homeland Security, National Strategy for Homeland Security, July 2002, available at [http://www.ncs.gov/library/policy\\_docs/nat\\_strat\\_hls.pdf](http://www.ncs.gov/library/policy_docs/nat_strat_hls.pdf). A subsequent strategy was issued by the Homeland Security Council in October 2007, which addressed the same broad areas as its 2002 predecessor—national objectives, threats, and initiatives. It noted that it “complemented” other major strategic documents including the March 2006 NSS. See Homeland Security Council, National Strategy for Homeland Security, October 2007, available at [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/nat\\_strat\\_homelandsecurity\\_2007.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/nat_strat_homelandsecurity_2007.pdf). The Homeland Security Council (HSC) was created by President George W. Bush with Executive Order 13228, of October 8, 2001, and its organization and operations were specified initially by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 1, of October 29, 2001. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 codified the organization and responsibilities of the HSC, and it also created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Act did not establish a formal requirement for a homeland security strategy, but it did direct the HSC to “assess the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States in the interest of homeland security and to make resulting recommendations to the President; [and to] oversee and review homeland security policies of the Federal Government and to make resulting recommendations to the President.” See Homeland Security Act of 2002, November 25, 2002, P.L. 107-296 §904.

should lie. Nor does the QHSR detail the roles and responsibilities of Federal or other institutions for each mission area.”<sup>33</sup>

## Selected Strategic Reviews and Reports without Statutory Requirements

Departments, agencies, and the executive branch as a whole may conduct strategic reviews and craft strategic guidance apart from any congressional mandate. Such efforts have the potential to contribute constructively to U.S. national security efforts, but they may, however, raise questions for Congress concerning whether and how to provide oversight.

### Department of Defense Comprehensive Review

DOD’s 2011 comprehensive review was reportedly driven by both strategic and budgetary imperatives. Falling under the auspices of two consecutive Secretaries of Defense, Robert Gates and Leon Panetta, the review went by several different names rather than a single acronym.

- **Requirement:** While DOD’s 2011 comprehensive review had no explicit statutory mandate, executive and legislative branch actions variously prompted or catalyzed the conduct of the review. In April 2011, President Obama directed DOD to identify \$400 billion in “additional savings” in the defense budget, as part of a broader effort to achieve \$4 trillion in deficit reduction over 12 years.<sup>34</sup> DOD’s efforts to comply with that guidance received an additional jumpstart from the enactment, in August 2011, of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA), P.L. 112-25, which established topline budget caps.<sup>35</sup>
- **Contents of the Mandate:** The mandate for the comprehensive review explicitly included strategy as well as resources. President Obama indicated from the outset that the search for savings should be driven by strategic considerations, calling for “a fundamental review of America’s missions, capabilities, and our role in a changing world.”<sup>36</sup> In May 2011, then-Secretary of Defense Gates, accepting the

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<sup>33</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Quadrennial Homeland Security Review Report: A Strategic Framework for a Security Homeland, February 2010, p.vi, available at <http://www.dhs.gov/quadrennial-homeland-security-review-qhsr>.

<sup>34</sup> President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on Fiscal Policy,” The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., April 13, 2011, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/04/13/remarks-president-fiscal-policy>.

<sup>35</sup> See the Budget Control Act of 2011, P.L. 112-25, §101 and §302, which amended §251 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, P.L. 99-177. DOD efforts to meet the presidential and the BCA targets were preceded by a relatively rigorous internal effort to reduce overhead launched by Secretary Gates in spring 2010. The results of that “efficiencies” scrub were announced on January 6, 2011, and then reflected in the defense budget request for FY2012. They included \$100 billion in savings over the FYDP identified by Military Services, which Services were allowed to keep and re-invest in priority programs; and \$78 billion in DOD-wide savings over the FYDP, which DOD stated that it would use to accommodate a lower budget topline. It should be noted that there may be a difference between “savings identified in advance” and “savings realized.” See Office of the USD (Comptroller), United States Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Request, Overview, February 2011, paragraph 5-1.

<sup>36</sup> See President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on Fiscal Policy,” The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., April 13, 2011, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/04/13/remarks-president-fiscal-policy>.

assign from the President, stressed that DOD's review would help "ensure that future spending decisions are focused on priorities, strategy, and risks, and are not simply a math and accounting exercise."<sup>37</sup> And in August 2011, new Secretary of Defense Panetta confirmed that DOD was implementing the President's April guidance by conducting a "fundamental review." He added that key questions in the review included: "What are the essential missions our military must do to protect America and our way of life? What are the risks of the strategic choices we make? What are the financial costs?"<sup>38</sup>

- **Execution:** Publicly and privately, DOD officials confirmed that based on the President's guidance, DOD launched a robust, senior-level review process that gave some consideration to strategic imperatives and involved iterative engagement with the White House. According to DOD officials, the results were manifested in the January 2012 DSG and in the defense budget request for FY2013.<sup>39</sup>

## Department of Defense Strategic Choices and Management Review (SCMR)

The SCMR ("skimmer" in common parlance), like the comprehensive review, was an internally-driven exercise nominally concerned with both strategy and resourcing.

- **Requirement:** The SCMR had no external mandate. Instead, it was conducted based on direction given by new Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in March 2013, not long after he assumed office.<sup>40</sup>
- **Contents of the mandate:** Secretary Hagel assigned responsibility for the conduct of the SCMR to Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, in coordination with the Joint Staff, and established a deadline for completion of May 31, 2013. OSD CAPE (Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation) was given day-to-day management responsibility for the effort, and the process, like recent QDR processes, was designed to be participatory. A number of participants later suggested that the SCMR was fundamentally budget-driven—designed to examine, in Deputy Secretary Carter's words, "every nickel" that DOD spends. DOD officials indicated that the review would be used to inform revisions to the FY2014 defense request should sequestration continue; to inform the fiscal guidance given to Military Services as they build their FY2015 and associated five-year budget plans; and to serve as the anchor for the 2014 QDR process. According to DOD officials, the SCMR considered three potential budget

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<sup>37</sup> Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Remarks at the American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., May 24, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1570>. He warned against identifying savings by simply "taking a percentage off the top of everything"—in his words, "salami-slicing"—because that approach would result in "a hollowing-out of the force."

<sup>38</sup> Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Meeting Our Fiscal and National Security Responsibility, August 3, 2011, available at [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0711\\_message1/](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0711_message1/).

<sup>39</sup> See Department of Defense, Defense Budget Priorities and Choices, January 2012, available at [http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense\\_Budget\\_Priorities.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Budget_Priorities.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Interviews with DOD officials, 2013, and see Jim Garamone, Hagel Tasks Civilian, Military Leaders to Examine Strategy, American Forces Press Service, March 18, 2013.

scenarios: the President's FY2014 budget; the BCA's sequester-level topline caps; and an "in-between" scenario. The review examined three substantive areas—management efficiencies and overhead reductions; compensation reforms; and changes to force structure and modernization plans. In the force structure and modernization arena, the SCMR considered the two sides of a core trade-off, between the size of the force and high-end technology.<sup>41</sup>

- **Execution:** DOD concluded the SCMR on schedule, briefed the results to President Obama, and then briefed the major conclusions to Congress and also to the public. DOD officials noted that the SCMR took the 2012 DSG as its baseline. Yet the tenor of the 31 July roll-out and associated discussions underscored that the primary focus of the review was budgetary—"the purpose" of the SCMR "was to understand the impact of further budget reductions on the Department, and develop options to deal with these additional cuts." The SCMR concluded that even the most drastic options under consideration in all three categories—efficiencies, compensation, and force structure/modernization—could help DOD meet sequester-level topline caps only toward the end of the BCA's ten-year application. DOD officials stressed that the SCMR generated ideas not decisions—it would be the 2014 QDR process, they argued, that would help DOD make tough strategic choices, and those choices would require, as a prerequisite, further clarity about fiscal constraints. Some DOD officials and outside observers have suggested that at some unspecified point of increased austerity, it becomes time to reconsider both the most fundamental aims that defense strategy seeks to realize, and the role that the U.S. intends to play on the world stage.<sup>42</sup>

## Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR)

In 2010, the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development issued the first—and to date only—QDDR report, based on a robust internal review process that broadly echoed the QDR process.

- **Requirement:** There was no external mandate for the QDDR. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton directed the State Department to conduct the review.

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<sup>41</sup> Interviews with DOD officials. See Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, "Defense Priorities in an Era of Constrained Budgets," remarks to Annual Conference, Center for a New American Security, June 12, 2013, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5256>; Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention, Louisville, KY, July 22, 2013, available at <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1796>; DOD press briefing by Secretary Hagel and Admiral Winnefeld, Washington, DC, July 31, 2013, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5280>; Defense Department Background Briefing on the Strategic Choices and Management Review, Washington, DC, July 31, 2013, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5282>; and Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter and ice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff James A. Winnefeld, Jr. Prepared Testimony, House Armed Services Committee hearing "Initial Conclusions Formed by the Defense Strategic Choices and Management Review," Washington, DC, August 1, 2013, available at <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20130801/101242/HHRG-113-AS00-Wstate-CarterA-20130801.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

- **Contents of the mandate:** The QDDR process was explicitly based on the QDR and the QHSR. It was designed to consider priorities, resourcing, and organization.
- **Execution:** The QDDR report was issued in December 2010 as an unclassified public document. It explicitly proposed a reform agenda, calling for specific changes in both the focus and the organizational structure of the State Department. The QDDR report described the 2010 NSS as an overall “blueprint,” and specifically invoked a number of its concepts, including “smart power” and its approach toward development.<sup>43</sup> State Department officials have suggested that there are no immediate plans to conduct a second QDDR.<sup>44</sup>

## Quadrennial Intelligence Community Review (QICR)

In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the national intelligence architecture—like that for homeland security—was overhauled, through legislation and presidential directives.<sup>45</sup> None of this guidance explicitly included a requirement for an intelligence strategy or a formal review, but the advent of the QICR (“quicker” in common parlance) may be considered a reflection of broadly shared interest, post-9/11, in improving the ways in which intelligence supports national security writ large. The lack of an external mandate for the QICR and the classification of most of its outputs may be responsible for the relative lack of attention that has been paid to the QICR, compared to its quadrennial counterparts, in the national security debates.

- **Requirement:** The QICR does not have a statutory mandate, but Congress has shown interest in the possible creation of such a mandate. In its Report on the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2006, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence recommended that the Director of National Intelligence develop a “formalized, periodic, and structured” quadrennial intelligence review modeled on the QDR.<sup>46</sup> There is also no statutory mandate for a national intelligence strategy (NIS) which might serve as a conceptual umbrella

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<sup>43</sup> See Department of State, “Leading through Civilian Power,” The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, 2010, available at <http://www.state.gov/s/dmr/qddr/>. See for example pp. ii, ix, 1, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Interviews with State officials, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> These included four Executive Orders issued in August 2004: “Establishing the President’s Board on Safeguarding Americans’ Civil Liberties,” “Strengthening the Sharing of Terrorism Information to Protect Americans,” “National Counterterrorism Center,” and “Strengthened Management of the Intelligence Community,” available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/orders/>; as well as the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, December 17, 2004 (P.L. 108-458). These changes were informed in part by the recommendations provided in July 2004 by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (“the 9/11 Commission”), a congressionally mandated, independent, bipartisan panel. See National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, The 9/11 Commission Report, July 2004, available at <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/index.htm>.

<sup>46</sup> See H.Rept. 109-101, Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2006, June 2, 2005, to accompany H.R. 2475. The Committee further proposed that the review “identify the breadth and depth of the threats, the capabilities existing and needed to combat those threats, and better identify the alignment of resources, authorities, and personnel needed to support those required capabilities.” The review would be used, in turn, to help the Director of National Intelligence “develop and periodically adjust a national intelligence strategy.” That strategy “would inform the types of information needed to support national priorities and objectives,” which in turn would facilitate determination “about which intelligence discipline, or disciplines, can best provide the required information.” Those decisions, in turn, “would inform guidance regarding capabilities development and allocation of funding among intelligence disciplines.” The Act was not enacted.

for a more detailed QICR. However, two NISs have been issued in recent years, in 2005 and in 2009, by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), addressing both mission and organization.<sup>47</sup>

- **Contents of the mandate:** QICR mandates are not statutory and do not appear to be publicly available. However, the basic quadrennial timeline, and the broad notion of considering the link between strategy and resourcing over a relatively long time frame, follow the basic contours of the QDR.
- **Execution:** QICRs have been conducted in 2001, 2005, and 2009. The first two produced classified outcomes. The third was a scenario-based exercise, looking out to 2025, which considered an array of alternative futures and the missions that would be required to address them. The 2009 QICR unclassified report merely described the scenarios; a separate, classified QICR Final Report reportedly addressed the implications of those scenarios for missions and capabilities.<sup>48</sup>

## Issues for Congress

Over time, there has been no shortage of debate and commentary about the role of “strategy” in the national security system, which also includes decision-making, budgeting, planning and execution, and congressional oversight. Attention has been focused on both congressional requirements for strategic reviews and reports, and execution of those activities by the executive branch. This section highlights issues that have been raised in these debates, and provides questions which, among others, Congress may wish to consider in evaluating current performance and considering proposals for change.

## Frequency

Most observers would suggest that the optimal frequency for any given national security strategic review would balance the need to update strategic thinking based on changing circumstances and priorities, with the need to provide sufficient continuity for effective and efficient execution. The available time of senior leaders and their staffs might also be a consideration. In the defense arena of national security, Congress requires the submission of a national security strategy (NSS) at least once per year, of a national defense strategy (NDS) as part of the quadrennial defense review (QDR) report every four years, and of a national military strategy (NMS) or update every two years.

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<sup>47</sup> See Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte, *The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America, Transformation through Integration and Innovation*, October 2005, available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nis.pdf>; and Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair, *The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America*, August 2009, available at [http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/2009\\_NIS.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/2009_NIS.pdf). The 2005 NIS named 15 objectives, divided between “strategic objectives” and “enterprise objectives,” each with subset objectives. It tasked specific offices to craft plans to meet each of the subset objectives. It also noted that it derived its objectives from the President’s NSS, and that its “enterprise-wide objectives derived from” the roughly simultaneous QICR process.

<sup>48</sup> See Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Quadrennial Intelligence Community Review, Scenarios: Alternative Futures the Intelligence Community Could Face*, January 2009, available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/qicr.pdf>.



Some observers have suggested that in today's fast-paced, globalized age, any written document is by definition too static—that agencies need more frequently updated internal guidance, and that both Congress and the public can gain a more accurate understanding of current Administration intent from public statements and congressional testimony.

Others still see a role for formal strategic reviews and published strategic guidance, but question currently mandated frequency. In particular, some have questioned the rationale for requiring a new NSS every year, arguing that the broad contours of the global security environment do not change rapidly enough to warrant a complete overhaul of the nation's basic outlook that frequently. Responses to specific changes in the global environment might be captured instead, they suggest, in specific policies or approaches. Too-frequent NSSs, they add, might introduce the risk of routinization. A number of observers, following that line of thinking, have proposed that NSSs be crafted and issued less frequently—for example, once every four years, rather than annually.<sup>49</sup>

Evaluating the advisability of possible revisions to statutory requirements regarding the frequency of strategy-crafting is complicated somewhat by the fact that, in practice, Administrations do not always comply with mandated frequency. For example, the George W. Bush Administration submitted only two NSSs in two terms, while the Obama Administration, by six months into its second term, had submitted only one. Such non-compliance can make it difficult to gauge the value of strategy mandates as written.

- Balancing real-world change with the importance of consistency for effectiveness and efficiency, how frequently should each key strategic review be conducted, and each key piece of strategic guidance issued?
- Does it make sense, in principle, that the higher-level the strategy—for example, national-level strategy versus strategy for a single Department—the less frequently it is likely to require substantial revision?
- What, if any, would be the costs of taking too long to revise a strategy, or of revising a strategy too frequently? At what point does the value of iterative strategy-generation run into the problem of diminishing returns?
- Does the failure of many Administrations to comply with the statutorily mandated frequency for NSS submissions suggest that Administrations need to be reminded of this statutory provision? Does it suggest, instead, that the requirement is not realistic and/or necessary? And in any case, what is the appropriate locus in Congress for NSS oversight responsibility?

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<sup>49</sup> The “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” (BGN) project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) recommended replacing the legislative requirement for an annual national security strategy with one for a quadrennial national security review (QNSR), conducted by the National Security Staff. See Center for Strategic and International Studies, Clark A. Murdock and Michele A. Flournoy, Lead Investigators, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report,” July 2005. Their work drew on a similar, though more narrowly defense-focused, proposal for a Quadrennial Security Review by the Commission on Roles and Missions (CORM) that was mandated by Congress in §1401-1411 of P.L. 103-160, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994; see John P. White, Chairman, Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces: Directions for Defense, May 24, 1995.

## Synchronization

In theory, it might make sense that national-level strategic guidance inform agency-level strategic guidance, which would in turn inform the strategies of agency components; and that individual agency strategies under the broad national security umbrella constructively inform each other. For example, the NSS might inform the QDR and its NDS, and they, in turn, might inform the NMS and the Chairman's risk assessment (CRA). In turn, the QDR, the quadrennial diplomacy and development review (QDDR), the quadrennial homeland security review (QHSR), and the quadrennial intelligence community review (QICR) all might cross-reference each other, to ensure that there are no conceptual disconnects, and no major gaps or unnecessary overlaps, in implementing the NSS. Statute explicitly requires some of this synchronization, and some non-statutorily-mandated strategic efforts explicitly note their relationships to other strategic reviews or guidance.

To make such synchronization possible, the timelines, formal or otherwise, for the conduct of reviews and the submission of reports, must line up appropriately. In principle, a strategic review may inform another by taking place earlier, although not too much earlier; and it could also do so while taking place concurrently if the two efforts are properly coordinated.

In the defense arena, current submission timelines are fairly well-suited for logical, sequential development of strategies. The QDR report and its accompanying NDS are due to Congress at the beginning of an Administration's second calendar year in office, by the date the President submits the budget for the next fiscal year.<sup>50</sup> The NSS is due to Congress on the same day. In theory, the QDR report and defense strategy could draw on the previous year's NSS, required "150 days" after an Administration takes office, and on the concurrent development process for the second-year NSS. The NMS, in turn, is required to be submitted to Congress by February 15 of even-numbered years—that is, just several days after the submission of the NSS, and either several days, or two years and several days, after the submission of the QDR report with its accompanying NDS. By these timelines, development of the NMS could draw on the defense strategy from two or four years earlier, as well as on the concurrent NDS/QDR process.

In practice, review and reporting timelines have been less coherent. In the defense arena of national security, for example, the 2001 QDR Report (with its embedded NDS) was issued in September 2001, before the George W. Bush Administration issued its first NSS (September 2002) from which the NDS might naturally take guidance. The NMS followed, but not until 2004, arguably a significant gap after the preceding NDS; and its publication almost immediately preceded the publication of the next NDS (March 2005), which arguably trumped the 2004 NMS. The 2005 NDS, in turn, preceded its "accompanying" QDR Report (February 2006) by almost a year, while that QDR Report was published just ahead of a new NSS (March 2006), which ought, arguably, to have informed the QDR process.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> This timeline marks a change from the original permanent QDR mandate, which had required submission of the QDR report "not later than September 30 of the year in which the review is conducted," Title 10 U.S. Code §118(d) as amended by the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000, P.L. 106-65 §901. The Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act of 2003, P.L. 107-314 §922, amended Title 10 U.S. Code §118(d) to require a QDR report submission date of "not later than the date on which the President submits the budget for the next fiscal year."

<sup>51</sup> More recently, the 2008 NDS arguably could have drawn on the 2006 NSS, published two years earlier. But the NDS's "accompanying" QDR Report was not published until two years later, in February 2010, arguably a long time for defense strategic thinking to remain static. The next NMS was published in 2011, arguably a sensible interval after the QDR (if not the 2008 NDS); but a new NSS had been issued in the meantime, in 2010, changing the higher-level (continued...)

- How important is it that national security-related strategic efforts at all levels reinforce each other? What are the potential pitfalls of developing strategy at lower levels without higher-level strategic top cover? What are the potential benefits, if any, of strategy-formulation unconstrained by parameters set by other strategies?
- To what extent does current statute support synchronization? To what extent if any might adjustments to statutory timelines help foster greater synchronization?

## **Prioritization and Assignment of Roles and Responsibilities**

Most observers consider that both prioritization and the assignment of roles and responsibilities are critical for the effective, efficient implementation of strategy.

Attention to prioritization during a strategic review process can improve the rigor of that process, providing a clear, agreed framework for making follow-on programmatic and policy decisions. Prioritization of objectives and activities by leadership at one level can help leaders at the next subordinate level more appropriately shape their own strategies and focus their planning and budgeting. And prioritization can also facilitate clearer communications with key audiences, including Congress and international partners.

The assignment of roles and responsibilities, in turn, is typically necessary because many missions could be performed, in principle, by any of several different agencies or components. At the national level, for example, a call to strengthen international partnerships could be met through military exercises led by DOD, development assistance programs led by the U.S. Agency for International Development, or participation in multi-lateral organizations led by the Department of State, among other options. If systemic-level priorities are named, but roles and responsibilities are not assigned, subordinate agencies or components may assume that the systemic-level priorities apply to each of them equally and that they should each apply their own respective tool kits against those priorities. Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities could help agencies, or agency components, far more effectively plan and resource; could help prevent unnecessary duplication of effort; and could help ensure that there are no major gaps in responsibility for strategy implementation.

Generally speaking, most recent strategic efforts—reviews and reports—have not prioritized the objectives or missions they prescribe, or assigned roles and responsibilities for implementing various facets of the strategy. For example, the 2012 defense strategic guidance (DSG) named ten “priority missions” but did not prioritize among those missions, and did not assign responsibility for those missions to specific actors.<sup>52</sup> Those strategic reviews and reports that have statutory mandates are, as a rule, not required by law either to prioritize or to assign roles and missions.<sup>53</sup>

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(...continued)

guidance germane to the NMS. And the January 2012 defense strategic guidance—essentially an NDS—almost immediately trumped the 2011 NMS.

<sup>52</sup> The DSG did state that only four of the ten missions—counter-terrorism, deterring and defeating aggression, countering WMD, and homeland defense—would be used to size the force.

<sup>53</sup> One exception is the statutory mandate for the QHSR, which requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to “outline and prioritize the full range of the critical homeland security mission areas of the Nation,” See Title 10, U.S. Code, §347.

Some observers trace the failure to include sufficiently specific guidance in strategy documents to the fact that explicit prioritization may not always be appropriate for unclassified discussions and publications. Some point to a tension between the need to provide detailed guidance to subordinates who will implement it, and the need to explain—and sell—a strategic vision to broader, potentially skeptical, public audiences. Those two imperatives may not be easily reconcilable in a single product.

Frustration with the lack of prioritization and assignment of roles and responsibilities has prompted some to call for institutionalizing the use of national security planning guidance (NSPG)—classified, internal guidance, at the national level, that includes both priorities and specific assignments. Such guidance could be one product of a strategic review process that could also generate an unclassified strategic guidance document—typical national security strategy—thus satisfying the requirements of two audiences, internal and external, in one broad effort.<sup>54</sup> Such a process might be modeled loosely on DOD processes, in which a strategic review, the QDR, informs the production of both unclassified strategic documents for public consumption, including the QDR Report and its organic NDS; and internal classified guidance that does prioritize and assign responsibilities, such as the Guidance for the Employment of the Force (GEF), which reportedly names specific overall and Combatant Command-based priorities; and the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), which reportedly assigns responsibilities, lead and supporting, to specific Military Services, agencies and components.<sup>55</sup> In its “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” project, the Center for Strategic and International Studies called for institutionalizing the use of a national-level Quadrennial National Security Review (QNSR) that would yield both NSPG and unclassified national security strategy; and the 2006 QDR echoed the call for the use of NSPG.<sup>56</sup> Congress took one step in this direction, in §1032 of the NDAA for FY2012, by requiring the President to issue national security planning guidance—specifically including priorities and assigned roles—in the arena of counter-terrorism.<sup>57</sup>

- Do current strategic efforts in the arena of national security sufficiently prioritize among national interests, objectives, and the approaches designed to achieve those objectives?
- Do such strategic efforts sufficiently assign roles and responsibilities for executing the strategy to subordinate agencies and components?
- To what extent if any might additional statutory mandates to incorporate prioritization and/or the assignment of roles and responsibilities into strategic reviews and reports be likely to produce constructive changes?

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<sup>54</sup> Under such a bifurcated approach, some observers suggest that Congress would still need access to the classified, internal guidance, in order to evaluate appropriately requests for funding and authorities. Others propose a trifurcated approach, in which strategic reviews would be designed to generate a third set of outputs particularly for Congress, distinct from those for the internal workforce and for the public at large. The fundamental question underlying all such observations concerns “how much is enough,” in order for Congress to be able to provide responsible oversight.

<sup>55</sup> Interviews with DOD officials, 2011, 2012, 2013. These two categories of classified internal guidance, although the names and acronyms have varied over time, have been utilized by DOD under a number of Administrations.

<sup>56</sup> See Center for Strategic and International Studies, Clark A. Murdock and Michele A. Flournoy, Lead Investigators, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report,” July 2005; and Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, February 2006, available at <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/report/report20060203.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> See the NDAA for FY2012, P.L. 112-81, §1032.

- What are the potential advantages and drawbacks, if any, of institutionalizing the use of national security planning guidance?

## Strategy and Resourcing

Both in practice and in theory, the relationship between strategy-making and resourcing can be fraught. Experts and practitioners differ markedly regarding how the two exercises ought to inform each other.

Some argue that good strategy should begin with resource-unconstrained consideration of the strategic context, U.S. national interests, U.S. objectives, and approaches designed to achieve those objectives, before considering the fiscal implications. Others argue that—particularly in tougher economic times—strategy is only germane if it takes into account current fiscal realities. In theory that might be done in a number of ways, for example by predicated strategy on a single set of fiscal assumptions, or by testing draft strategy against several different fiscal scenarios.

As a rule, statutory mandates for strategic reviews and reports do not require the incorporation of fiscal constraints. Indeed, the mandate for the QDR—which is required to make recommendations that are not constrained by the President’s budget request—expressly prohibits it.<sup>58</sup> Some mandates—for example, those for the QHSR, the QDR, and the NDP’s alternative force structure proposal—do require a cost estimate or budget plan, but those exercises are unconstrained in the sense that no parameters are specified for those plans or estimates.

In turn, most observers and practitioners agree that strategy is powerful only when it shapes decision-making, and in particular, when it is reflected in budget requests. To that end, some observers have recommended the adoption of more “unified” approaches to national security budgeting that would link budgeting more closely with strategy.<sup>59</sup>

- What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of using fiscal constraints to shape the conduct of strategy reviews and the content of strategy reports?
- What mechanisms might help ensure that conclusions of strategic reviews and the content of strategic guidance directly shape specific policy and resourcing decisions?

## Competition of Ideas

Many observers suggest that strategic review processes can benefit greatly from a competition of ideas. Such competitions can take an internal form. In one internal approach, a “red team” that enjoys full access to the formal review process regularly grades the homework of that formal process by challenging its assumptions and conclusions. DOD used a red team to support the conduct of its 2006 QDR.<sup>60</sup> In another internal approach, several groups are tasked

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<sup>58</sup> See Title 10, U.S. Code, §118(b)(4), which requires that the QDR shall be conducted so as to “to make recommendations that are not constrained to comply with and are fully independent of the budget submitted to Congress by the President pursuant to section 1105 of title 31.” The NDAA for FY2012, P.L. 112-81, introduced the phrase “and are fully independent of”.

<sup>59</sup> See CRS Report R42997, *A Unified National Security Budget? Issues for Congress*, coordinated by Catherine Dale.

<sup>60</sup> The team included retired General and Flag Officers and leading think-tank experts. They examined and commented directly to DOD leadership on the QDR process as it unfolded. Interviews with DOD officials, 2005 and 2006. The (continued...)

simultaneously with the same assignment. The best-known historical example may be President Eisenhower's top secret "Project Solarium," carried out shortly after Stalin's death in 1953 to reassess U.S. "containment" policy toward the Soviet Union. The methodology included the formation of three teams of seasoned experts and practitioners, both military and civilian. Each team was assigned a strategy to elaborate and defend. After working for six weeks at the National War College, the teams presented the strongest cases they could muster at a session with the President Eisenhower, attended by the rest of the National Security Council, senior military leaders, and others.<sup>61</sup>

A competition of ideas can also take an external form. In this approach, one or more external reviews might be conducted in parallel with a formal process. Their results might be considered together with, and compared to, those of the formal process, by some outside adjudicator such as the President or Congress. Part of the mandate for the national defense panel (NDP), conducted in conjunction with the QDR, is "external"—to produce and cost out alternative force structures.<sup>62</sup>

No such mandate exists for a "competition of ideas" mechanism to run in parallel with the crafting of national security strategy. But the QDR independent panel (QDRIP), which paralleled the work of the 2010 QDR, recommended the creation, by the executive and legislative branches, of a standing Independent Strategic Review Panel of leading experts to review and assess the national security environment; review and assess the current NSS; review and assess current national security missions and organization; and make recommendations to inform the formal national security strategy process.<sup>63</sup>

- How important is it to the crafting of good strategy to build a competition of ideas into the process?
- What are the respective advantages of internal and external versions of a competition of ideas?
- How important is it effective, "honest broker" adjudication of a competition of ideas, to the effectiveness of that competition?

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(...continued)

Center for a New American Security (CNAS) has recommended that DOD institutionalize the use of internal red teams to "independently assess requirements, programs, and operational plans to provide an unvarnished, objective perspective to DOD's senior civilian and military leadership." See Lieutenant General David W. Barno, (retired), Nora Bensahel, Matthew Irvine and Travis Sharp, *Sustainable Pre-eminence: Reforming the U.S. Military at a Time of Strategic Change*, CNAS, May 2012, p.22, available at <http://www.cnas.org/sustainablepreeminence>.

<sup>61</sup> See Michele A. Flournoy and Shawn W. Brimley, "Strategic Planning for National Security: A New Project Solarium," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 41, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2006; and interviews with Mr. Andy Marshall, Office of Net Assessment, DOD.

<sup>62</sup> See Title 10 U.S. Code, §118(f).

<sup>63</sup> Stephen J. Hadley and William J. Perry, Co-Chairmen, "The QDR in Perspective: Meeting America's National Security Needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *The Final Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review Independent Panel*, July 2010, pp. xix-xxi and 100-103.

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